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**Opening Statement delivered by Dr. Jinmi Adisa, Director, Citizenship
and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) to the AU-OATUU Partnership
Forum, Accra, Ghana, 16-18 April 2014**

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It is with great pleasure that I am addressing this AU-OATUU Partnership Forum as the representative of Her Excellency, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. This Forum is taking place at a unique historical moment in which the OAU/AU is finalizing the yearlong celebrations of its 50th Anniversary.

This is an appropriate moment for stocktaking. It is the point in time in which Africans have to reflect upon the past and carry its lessons into planning for the future. It is the moment in which we have to garner the strengths that we have acquired “on the journey so far” and the lessons of its detours, the side roads and hedges, the weeds and thorns of its pathways.

In this context, the most important lesson that we have learnt since the era of African independence is about the value of experience. The situation in Africa has taught us that experience is simply the best teacher which cannot be surpassed because it is the harbinger of the hard truth.

Oscar Wilde has observed that “the future is only the past again entered through another gate.” The appropriate gate for passage into the future is that of experience because it gives us a basis to review and learn and to use the lessons acquired as a signpost and guide to the future. It is in this context that the AU is developing African Agenda 2063 as a shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development in the next fifty years.

Agenda 2063

African Agenda 2063 is conceived as a transformational agenda for realizing a precise vision of Renaissance African with explicit goals, milestones, key drivers and enablers as well as priority actions. The agenda was built on a series of stakeholder consultations that takes into account national, regional, continental and global situations and uses this inclusiveness and sense of ownership to establish a roadmap for progress, reconstruction and rejuvenation. The agenda is still work in progress and the

AU considers that the role of workers and the labor movement would be crucial to its realization. Thus the agenda is being presented formally to this workers Forum for consideration, review, analysis, refinement and inputs with specific emphasis on the role of labors and employers in promoting its realization.

I urge that the distinguished participants in this Forum consider this faithfully as the first order of business and offer concrete outcomes that will make Agenda 2063 a constructive, viable and realistic plan for shared, inclusive development. The foundations that participants lay today will set parameters for future generations to build upon. It is hardly a secret that most participants today will not be around by 2063. However, their children will be and the curse or blessing they will throw in their parent's direction in life aftermath will depend on what we do today to assure them a proper foundation for development. This is the burden and responsibility of Agenda 2063 and it is a profound debt that we all owe to nature and which we have an obligation to ensure that we pay.

The ECOSOCC Elections

As part of this framework, we are also presenting a progress report on the process of ECOSOCC elections. ECOSOCC is the civil society policy organ of the African Union embracing all non state-actors. The Organ stands at the epicentre of the people-centric character of the AU. However, since the expiration of its last General Assembly in late 2012, it has proved difficult to establish another because of the requirements for qualification. The call for application is being made for a fourth time but the irony is that the benchmark for qualification is one that most Trade Unions can easily help to overcome. The Trade Union movement is a significant component of the African civil society community, and this case, particularly strategic as Trade Unions qualify almost automatically as membership based organizations. The effective mobilization of Trade Unions was pivotal to the establishment of the last ECOSOCC General Assembly and expectation is that this will be the case again.

It is therefore essential, that this Forum should be used to galvanize Trade Unions to participate in the ECOSOCC process as was the case in 2007 and 2008 when Trade Unions rallied in support of the process under the leadership of the former Secretary-General, the venerable Alhaji Hassan Sunmonu. Thus the program agreed with OATUU Secretariat also emphasizes the lessons and experience of previous participation of Trade Union as a framework for progressive development of ECOSOCC as an important constituent of the African Union.

The African Security Situation

Furthermore, this Forum will reflect upon the security situation on the continent and its various countries. The challenge of order, democracy and stability is one that is becoming more and more critical in Africa. Yet, a peaceful, stable, orderly environment is a necessary and sufficient condition for growth and development. It is clear therefore, that the bid to increase Africa's significance on the international environment and to realize the developmental aspirations of its citizenry cannot be effective until we have a conducive security environment. Above all, Agenda 2063 will only be meaningful if there is a proper security atmosphere. This consideration underscores the final part of the program for this event.

Appreciation and the Collaborative Agenda

Accordingly, the theme and topics for this Partnership Forum have been chosen after close consultation with OATUU to focus on basic needs and requirements that should inform our cooperative agenda. As we deliberate upon them and consequently construct a collaborative agenda for dealing with them in a framework of mutuality, it would be useful to also consider institutional structures that are needed to prosecute the joint agenda.

In this regard, I would like to thank the current and past Secretariat of OATUU, for the sense of unity that has informed the development of this partnership. I will pay particular tribute to the leadership of Alhaji Hassan Sunmonu former Secretary-General of OATUU, Prof. Ghandu, former President of OATUU and Mr. Francis Aktwoli, who helped the African Union to organize the ECOSOCC mid-term elections in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2011. The honourable Mr. Aktwoli has stongly supported the AU program in other essential capacities and his succession into the Presidency of OATUU is thus a source of inspiration to us. I will also like to acknowledge the energetic and vibrant new Secretary-General, Mr. Owei Lakemfa and his staff in the OATUU Secretariat in Accra for the creativity and acumen that they have brought to the task. His painstaking devotion has given fillip to the AU-OATUU Partnership Forum held in Addis Ababa in 2013 and serves as a strong pillar for the current exercise. I would also like to thank the « men and women » in the African workers army in their entirety for their spirit of fellowship and commitment to the work of the African Union.

Conclusion

Finally, we have come a long way since this Partnership Forum was initiated in 2006 but Agenda 2063 instructs us that we have a much longer road to travel. The famous poet, Robert Frost, has observed “the woods are lovely, dark and deep but we have promises to keep and miles to go before we sleep and miles to go before we sleep.” The objective of our consultation today is to equip ourselves with adequate equipments and supplies for that noble but strenuous journey.

I thank you all.